

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER  
LISTED

JAN 14 2004

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Towanda Masonic Lodge No. 30 A. F. & A. M.

Other name/site number Towanda Area Historical Museum / 015-5420-0003

### 2. Location

Street & number 401 Main Street ☐ not for publication

City or town Towanda ☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Butler Code 015 Zip code 67144

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination  
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard D. Parkhurst SHAD November 24, 2003  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional  
Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ entered in the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Towanda Masonic Lodge  
Name of property

Bulter County, KS  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

#### Category of Property (Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

#### Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	
	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register  
0

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions (Enter Categories from instructions)

Social: meeting hall

Commerce/ Trade: specialty store

Government: post office

Education: library

#### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and culture: museum

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements

#### Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: limestone  
walls Stone: limestone

roof Asphalt

other Glass

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property Towanda Masonic Lodge County and State Butler County, KS

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

### Period of Significance

1904- 1953

### Significant Dates

1904

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Reed, T. R.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ Previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

County and State Butler County, KS

**Acreage of Property less than 1 acre**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

☐ See continuation sheet

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Name/title	Melissa Fisher Isaacs, National Register Intern				
Organization	Kansas State Historical Society	Date	April 2003		
Street & number	6425 SW 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Telephone	785-272-8681		
City or town	Topeka	State	KS	Zip code	67144

Submit the following items with the completed form:

## Maps

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

name	Towanda Area Historical Museum				
street & number	435 9 <sup>th</sup> Street		telephone	620-536-2345	
city or town	Towanda	state	KS	zip code	67144

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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### Description

The Towanda Masonic Lodge No. 30 A.F. & A.M. is a two story, two-part commercial block with an asphalt shed roof and a basement. The building is constructed from native square-cut ashlar limestone laid in regular courses. The large ground floor display windows and recessed double entrance doors of the front facade reflect trends in commercial architecture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Likewise, the interior division of the building into a ground floor commercial space and a second floor lodge hall follows the tendency of fraternal orders of the period to build their meeting halls in this form. The Masonic Lodge fronts north onto Main Street in Towanda, Kansas, and has no setback from the sidewalk. A one-story concrete block addition is attached to the rear of the building. The property has been restored to its original appearance and is in excellent condition.

The Towanda Masonic Lodge has a rectangular footprint which measures 25 feet by 60 feet. The front facade stands 32 feet tall. This facade is dominated on the ground floor by two large, four-pane display windows which frame the recessed pair of glass entrance doors topped by a divided light transom. Long single stones laid horizontally up to the height of the display windows extend from the outer edges of the display windows to the corners of the building. Regular courses of stone rise from the level of the tops of the display windows to cover the face of the second floor. Three one-over-one double hung windows, evenly spaced, penetrate the second floor level of the facade. These windows have thin tooled stone sills and thick tooled arched stone lintels; the lintel over the middle window is engraved with the words "Masonic Lodge No. 30 A.F. & A.M." and the square-and-compass insignia of the lodge. Above the lintels, a simple entablature runs across the building's face. The architrave is composed of one row of large, flat-faced stones which are much longer than and nearly twice as thick as the regular coursed stones. The frieze is comprised of two courses of stone: the bottom course curves out from the plane of the facade and the second, flat-faced, course protrudes out to rest on this curve. Two bands of stone, set back and flush with the facade, run above the frieze. The cornice is a band of narrow stones which juts out slightly from the plane of the facade.

The west face of the Towanda Masonic Lodge, which runs parallel to Third Street, is composed of regular courses of square-cut ashlar limestone. The height of the face steps down at three intervals from the front to the rear of the building; two stone pillars protrude from the first and second step-downs. Five one-over-one double-hung windows fenestrate the second floor of the building. A door, located between the first and second windows, provides entrance to the second floor by way of a wrought iron stairway with railing. On the ground floor, a door towards the rear of the building provides entrance via a set of three concrete steps. These doors and windows are all topped by thick rectangular stone lintels; the windows have slender stone sills as well.

The east-facing exterior wall, which it once shared with an adjoining building, is limestone rubble set in irregular courses. Two red brick chimneys with metal caps protrude from the top of the wall as it steps down in three intervals towards the rear of the building.

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The south elevation wall has two one-over-one double hung windows with rectangular lintels and narrow sills on the second level; a fire escape, added in the early 1980s, provides egress from the east window. Concrete blocks shaped to simulate stone were used to construct the one story, hipped roof addition that attaches to the rear of the building and serves as protection for the stairs to the basement. The addition, added shortly after the construction of the main building, measures 15.5 feet by 5.5 feet and is pierced on its west-facing wall by a double door and on its south facing wall by a one-over-one double-hung window. The addition blocks one window on the ground floor of the main building; its lintel is still visible above the roof of the addition. Two other windows with rectangular lintels remain intact on the ground floor.

On the ground floor, the interior features an open commercial space, with wood floors and a pressed tin ceiling. A handicapped-accessible restroom is located in the southwest corner. The windows of the open second floor meeting room are recessed into the walls and have simple wooden moldings. A chair rail bounds the room. A three-step dais sits in the room's south end. An interior staircase was added to the building in 1966.

In 1996, due to dwindling membership, the Towanda Masonic chapter merged with the chapter in Augusta, Kansas, and sold their building to the City of Towanda to be used as a local history museum. Between 1996 and 1999, the Towanda Area Historical Museum Society restored the building to its original appearance. Lowered ceilings were removed and the original tin ceilings were repaired. Light fixtures appropriate for the 1911 electrification of the building replaced modern light fixtures. The plaster walls were patched and painted. Invasive ductwork was relocated in the basement. The storefront and windows that had been bricked shut (c. 1970) were reopened and restored to match a photograph taken soon after the building's construction in 1904.

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### Statement of Significance

The Towanda Masonic Lodge (c. 1904) is historically significant under Criterion A for its role in the civic life of its community. Since the building's construction, it has served as home to the local Masonic chapter, the post office, the library, businesses, and other local clubs and organizations. The Towanda Masonic Lodge is also significant under Criterion C as an example of native limestone construction and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial architecture. The dignified stone structure has been carefully restored to its original appearance and continues to serve its community as a local history museum.

In 1870 Reverend Isaac Mooney platted the town of Towanda near a freshwater spring. This natural attraction, which had drawn hunters, traders, and Native Americans for many years, had become, as Americans increasingly made their way westward, a logical outpost for local trade. Two stage coach lines passed through the area, and wagons west across Kansas stopped at the spring for refreshment. Towanda quickly became a busy village. On March 31, 1892, however, much of the town was destroyed by a tornado. In the aftermath of this disaster, many buildings on Towanda's Main Street were quickly constructed wood frame storefronts. The Towanda Masonic Lodge, built in stone, symbolized Towanda's recovery. In 1908, the editor of *The Towanda News* wrote that "The Dawn of hope for the little city of Towanda sprung into existence in the year 1903 when the Masonic order announced their intention of erecting a two story Stone building on the corner of main, and third streets...Looking back, one cannot but admire the courage of those who laid the foundation and set the pace which has developed into the neatest cleanest little city in the state of Kansas."

### Historical background and significance:

In May 1903, the Towanda Masons purchased the lot on the southeast corner of Third and Main Streets in Towanda for fifty dollars from Mr. A. Loncer. In April 1904, a committee comprised of William R. Green, Michael Orban, Jr., Peter Poorbaugh, and Daniel H. Cupp, and chaired by Andrew J. Ralston was appointed to prepare plans for a new lodge building and submit those plans to contractors for bids. Mr. T.R. Reed placed the winning bid; Mr. Reed was a Towanda citizen who had gained prominence in the area as a contractor, and was responsible for buildings such as the Wholesale Grocery building in Anthony, Kansas, and at least eight buildings on the grounds of the Wichita Amusement Park.

In the spring of 1904, bonds were sold to members of the lodge to raise \$3000 for the construction of the building. A cornerstone laying ceremony, attended by the Masons' Grand Master and the lodge officers, included the deposit of a number of items in the cornerstone. A measure of the organization's place in the Towanda community, the Methodist Church, the Christian Church, a band, and a local choir all took part in the ceremony. The women of the local chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star provided a banquet. The completed building was dedicated on September 14, 1904.

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At the time of the Towanda Masonic Lodge's construction, Towanda was a modestly sized town situated on the edge of the Flint Hills and surrounded by farmland. The town's Main Street consisted of two relatively well-populated blocks of brick and frame storefronts which housed, among other things, two feed barns, a post office, the Knights of Pythias Hall, a hotel, and a selection of shops and stores. Beyond Main Street, Towanda had three churches, a school, and number of residences scattered sparsely across the town's plat. The Missouri Pacific railroad line rounded the south end of Towanda; a depot served the patrons of the three passenger trains that stopped there each day and a stock yard was situated to take advantage of the railroad's shipping facilities.

The Towanda Masonic Lodge was constructed of native limestone quarried from H.L. Raymond's farm two miles north of Towanda. As one moves west across Kansas, limestone becomes an increasingly significant feature in the built landscape. The absence of trees for timber often prompted town builders to fashion their buildings from the limestone their location provided them. The process of quarrying stone for construction in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was time-consuming and labor-intensive, which increased the cost of the building, but the message sent by a stone building was one of permanence and stability—a valuable asset to a community intent on growth and prosperity.

The lodge is an example of a two-part commercial block, a building form that makes up a significant percentage of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial structures in the United States. During this period, fraternal orders often constructed their lodges in the two-part form; the rent from the downstairs tenant enabled a fraternal order to maintain the building and to have a source of income for charitable works. Additionally, as is the case with the Towanda Masonic Lodge, the use of the upper story as a fraternal lodge is often indicated in the facade of the building; the second story is taller than the first.

The lower story of the Towanda Masonic Lodge has served a commercial or civic function throughout most of the building's history. Shriver & Glass, which later became the E.A. Shriver Hardware Company, was an implement company that occupied the lower floor. Opened in 1904 by E.A. Shriver and A.J. Glass, the store was a local source for the hardware, paint, and farm implements necessary to Towanda farmers. From the mid-1920s until 1961, the post office was located there. In July 1947, the Towanda Professional Women's Club opened the city library, with a collection made up of donations from the community, in a room created specifically for this purpose. The library was located in the Masonic Lodge until 1966, when a new building was built to house the collection. From 1966 to 1996, the Lions Club International leased the ground floor to use as their organization's meeting space.

The Towanda chapter of Masons, formally known as Towanda Masonic Lodge No. 30 A.F. & A.M., received its charter in September 1888. In forming a Masonic chapter, the men of Towanda were following in a tradition that had come from Europe with the colonists and become widespread in the United States as Americans created communities on the frontier. In a notably mobile nation, fraternal orders such as the Masons provided the network of social support a more sedentary people might have found in extended family. Membership in fraternal lodges also



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provided opportunities to take part in social events and gain status in the community.

Freemasonry has an ancient and mostly secret history; through ritual and lecture it seeks to impress on its members a sense of duty to humanity. Grand Master Charles N. Fowler noted in his address at the 1928 annual meeting of Kansas Masons that, "By and through the teachings of the institution and its mighty and silent influences, Masons always and everywhere have been the foe of tyranny and usurpation of power, the defenders of justice, right and truth, and the enemies of intolerance, oppression, bigotry, fanaticism, and all the other evil influences that oppress and crush humanity." The earliest Masonic chapter in Kansas was formed in 1854 at least in part by men who had come to the territory to support the free-state movement against slavery.

The Towanda chapter has continued the organization's legacy of good works through its contributions to its community: fundraising for healthcare for a terminally ill child, sponsoring an annual scholarship essay contest, supporting local sports teams, and loaning its meeting space to other organizations such as the Lions Club International, the Boy Scouts, and the Order of the Eastern Star. In Vol. P. Mooney's *History of Butler County, Kansas*, an observer states that the Towanda Masonic Lodge "enjoys the reputation of being one of the best 'working' lodges in this jurisdiction. Its membership comprises the best in the community. The latch string always 'hangs out' to those who are worthy."

In addition to the Masons, the Towanda chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, a women's auxiliary to the Masons which served a like function—observing the humanitarian principles of freemasonry, performing charitable acts, and providing women the opportunity to socialize—used the lodge's second floor meeting room. The Towanda chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star was organized in 1890, and merged with the Augusta, Kansas, chapter in 1996.

The Towanda Masonic Lodge continues to illustrate that it holds a place at the center of Towanda's community life. In 1996, the Towanda Masons' chapter consolidated with that in Augusta, Kansas, and sold their building to the City of Towanda to be used as a local history museum. Funds raised through community action have allowed the Towanda Area Historical Museum Society to restore the building to its original appearance, removing the bricks from the windows and storefront, replacing the light fixtures with fixtures appropriate to the 1911 installation of electricity in the building, removing paneling from the walls, repairing the tin ceiling, and moving invasive ductwork to the basement. At the request of the Towanda Masons, the lodge room has been arranged to represent its appearance on the night the Masons adjourned their final meeting there. The Towanda Area Historical Museum opened in 1999, and possesses a collection of artifacts and photographs that document the history of the greater Towanda area.

For nearly 100 years, the Towanda Masonic Lodge has served its community as a source of civic pride, both through the integrity of its appearance and through the bonds of community that have been forged within its walls.

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### Bibliography

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*Daily Walnut Valley Times*, 28 April 1904, p. 2.

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Fowler, Charles N. "Grand Master's Address," *Proceedings of the Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Kansas*. Topeka, Kansas: Grand Lodge of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Kansas, 1928.

Johnston, George W. *Cavalcade of Freemasonry of Kansas*. Kansas City, Kansas: The Masonic News, 1938.

Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture, Updated Edition*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2000.

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Mooney, Vol. P. *History of Butler County, Kansas*. Lawrence, Kansas: Standard Publishing Company, 1916.

"New Library Room to Be in Masonic Lodge," *Western Butler County Times*, 6 March 1947, p. 1

"New Masonic Building," *Daily Walnut Valley Times*, 16 September 1904, p. 1.

*Standard Atlas of Butler County, Kansas*. Chicago, Illinois: G.A. Ogle & Co. Publishing, 1905.

"Towanda," *El Dorado Walnut Valley Times*, 23 March 1906, p. 78.

"T.R. Reed," *El Dorado Walnut Valley Times*, 23 March 1906, p. 15.

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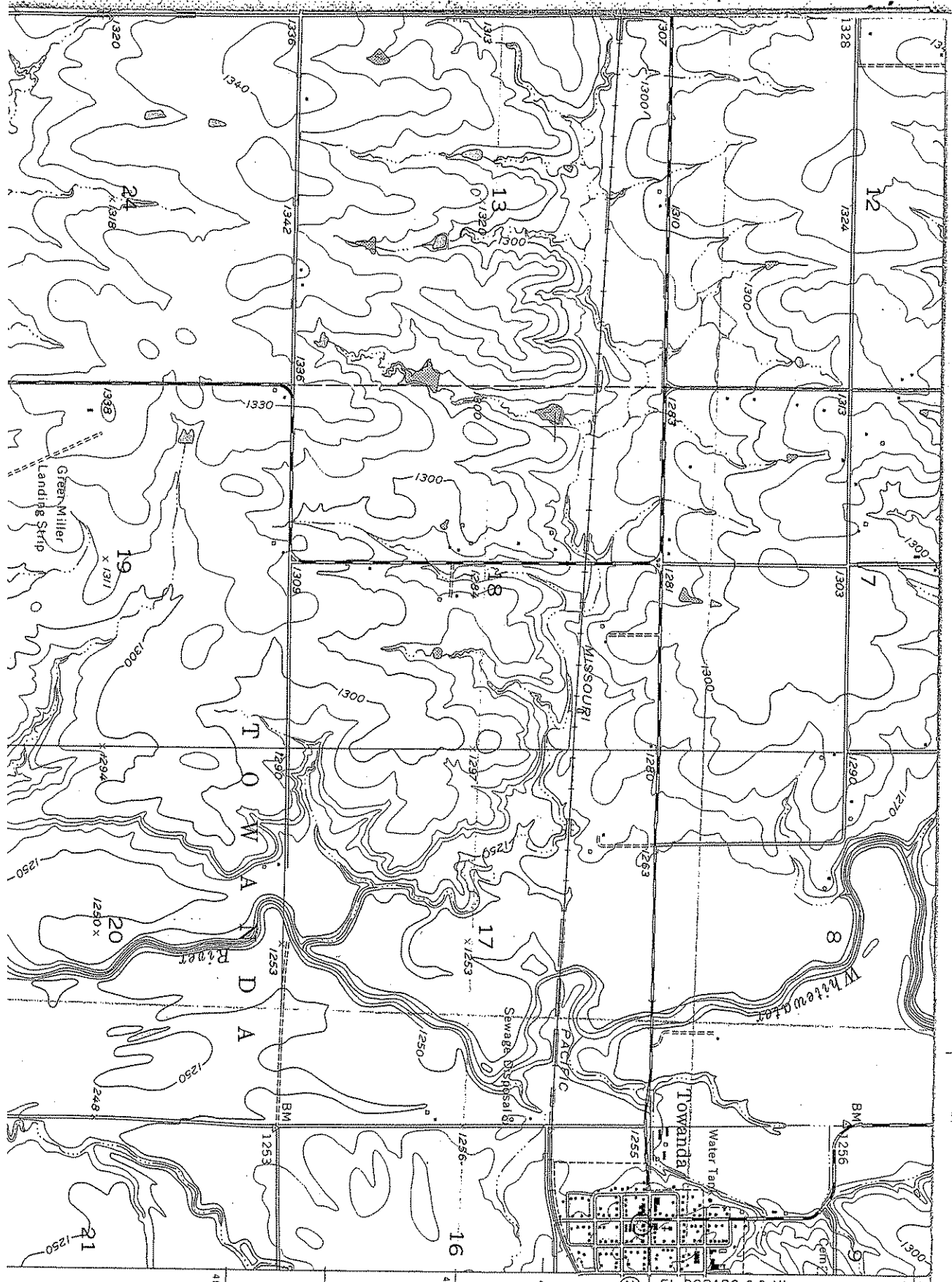
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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated property is located on the southeast corner of Main and Third Street, lot number one (1) in block one (1) in the Railroad Addition to the Towanda, Butler County, Kansas. Third Street runs north and south along the west side of the property. Main Street runs west to east along the north facade of the building. Adjacent property lines bound the nominated building to the east and south.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boudnaries contain all land historically associated with the nominated property.



Towanda  
Missouri  
Sewage Disposal  
Green Miller  
Landing Strip  
14/6758601  
4/184500  
4730°

EL DORADO 9.9 MI.